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MARITIME STRATEGY IN A REVOLUTIONARY ERA

BY

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USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER

MARITIME STRATEGY IN A REVOLUTIONARY ERA

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

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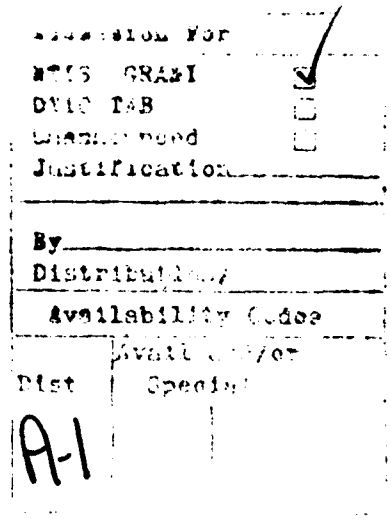

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INTRODUCTION

The Maritime Strategy as codified by Admiral Watkins in 1986[1] provided a framework for global use of Naval forces across the operational continuum to war termination. It was primarily a product of thinking based on a national strategy of containment, and as such, one could ask if it is valid into the 21st century. However, of even more importance, is it valid during the present revolutionary period as we transition into that new world order still being envisioned for the future?

Admiral Watkins noted in his preview to the Maritime Strategy that not only is it "...a strategy for today's forces, today's capabilities, and today's threat. It also is a dynamic concept...."[2]

My purpose in this essay is to examine the framework provided by the Maritime Strategy; review the threats perceived today by our national leaders, including President Bush and Secretaries Cheney and Baker, as compared to the threats portrayed by Admiral Watkins;[3] and then determine which changes, if any, need to be made to the Maritime Strategy such that it retains its validity as a warfighting vehicle.

FRAMEWORK PROVIDED BY MARITIME STRATEGY

Before getting into the details of the Maritime Strategy, it is important to review what its author claimed it to be and not to be. As defined by Admiral Watkins,

> The Maritime Strategy is firmly set in the context of national strategy,..., the Maritime Strategy recognizes that the unified and specified commanders fight the wars, under the direction of the President and the Secretary of Defence, and thus does not purport to be a detailed war plan with firm timeliness, tactical doctrine, or specific target sets. Instead, it offers a global perspective to operational commanders and provides a foundation for advice to the National Command Authorities....[4]

In other words, the Maritime Strategy was designed to flesh out, an a global scale, what the Naval Warfare Publication (NWP) 1, Strategic Concepts of the U.S. Navy, described in general terms as the Navy's two basic functions of sea control and power projection,[5] and to provide to the operational commanders a background on which to draw up their own theater strategies.

The Maritime Strategy is divided into three segments which cover the operational continuum; Peacetime Presence, Crisis Response, and Warfighting. Deterrence of a war with the Soviet Union is one of the main objectives of both Peacetime Presence and Crisis Response. Deterrence of strategic nuclear war is the stated objective of the third segment, Warfighting.[6] Discussion of each of these follows.

Peacetime Presence

Peacetime Presence is accomplished through forward deployment of Naval forces. Their presence in ports and transiting the seas provide daily evidence of U.S. interest in those particular nations visited and the regions in which we exercise.[7] Freedom of navigation is thus ensured not only to the U.S. and our allies but to all nations whose economics depend on the sea to reach foreign markets. In addition, our forces contribute to international stability by supporting the regional balances of power. This is accomplished through training and exercises with foreign naval forces,[8] strengthening not only our old alliances but creating new friendships.

Crisis Response

Crisis Response is "the heart of (the) Maritime Strategy."[9] The concern in the 1980s was an out of control crisis that would lead to a confrontation with the Soviets, thus all efforts were to be exerted in controlling crises.

Crisis Response consists of containing and controlling the crisis using the range of Naval forces' capabilities from presence, surveillance, show of force, limited strikes, landing Marines, noncombatant evacuation, through naval blockade.[10]

Much of the discussion in this segment of the Maritime Strategy, however, deals with reasons for Naval forces being useful for crisis response but does not provide a clear framework for their uses for the operational commander to apply in formulating his theater strategy.

The Maritime Strategy: Warfighting

The third segment of the Maritime Strategy, Warfighting, is essentially a strategy for global conventional war against the Soviets as a counter to the use of their massive ground force advantage against Europe. The Warfighting strategy consists of three phases: Deterrence or the Transition to War; Seizing the Initiative; and Carrying the Fight to the Enemy.[11] As discussed earlier, the proposed trigger to a confrontation with the Soviets would be an escalated crisis. A description of each of these phases follows.

Phase I: Deterrence or the Transition to War

As titled, the first goal of Phase I is deterrence. By early closure of the crisis and/or escalation control we would make clear our intention to allow the Soviets no opportunity for engagement on their terms or to gain any areas by default. However, also included in Phase I is the preparation for Transition to War should deterrence fail. The strategy includes

the following efforts in this phase: conduct rapid forward deployment of additional forces in crisis, to include anti-submarine warfare forces; embarkation of Marine amphibious forces and forward movement of maritime prepositioning ship squadrons; and forward deployment of sea-based air power. All of this to be done not only early but also on a global basis as a deterrent measure to persuade the Soviets that they would not be able to ignore any region of the globe. As indicated in the Maritime Strategy "such early deployment is reversible and not necessarily provocative."[12]

Two other equally important actions early in this phase are the call up of the reserves and the effective use of sealift.

Phase II: Seizing the Initiative

The premise of entering Phase II is that deterrence of Soviet military involvement in the crisis has failed and they have entered the conflict against us, thus causing the transition from low intensity conflict to war. Our response would be to seize the initiative from the Soviets and launch a global effort against their naval forces. The goal indicated was to apply pressure on the Soviets to end the war on our terms. In addition, seizing the initiative would both contribute to alliance solidarity and dilute Soviet efforts.[13]

This phase of Warfighting, seizing the initiative as far forward as possible,[14] would direct U.S. Naval forces to commence the destruction of Soviet forces in all theaters and to neutralize Soviet client states, and to fight our way toward Soviet home waters. It continues by saying we must defeat the Soviets in all dimensions including base support.[15]

The array of naval warfare tasks would be applied on a global basis up to and including strike warfare capability against the home bases of the bombers of Soviet naval aviation. Our adversary should assume "no inviolable sanctuaries".[16] Included would be an aggressive campaign against all Soviet submarines, including ballistic missile submarines, to reduce the threat on the Western Alliances resupply lines. Concurrently, we would counter the Soviet air threat through offensive antiair warfare with the assistance of both sister services and allies, and conduct the pursuit and destruction of the Soviet fleets worldwide, again with our allies playing a critical role. In addition, we would engage the strike capability of our carrier battle forces in combination with the U.S. Air Force and allied forces to strengthen NATO's flanks and to also apply pressure in Northeast Asia.

Phase III: Carrying the Fight to the Enemy

Phase III brings closure to those efforts initiated in Phase II, the destruction of all the Soviet fleets. Air and amphibious power would be a credible threat to the bases and support structure of the Soviet Navy, and destruction of their submarines, including ballistic missile submarines, would apply pressure on them through its effect on the nuclear balance. Our efforts along with those of our allies would be directed at the termination of war in terms favorable to the United States.[17]

Our warfighting objectives as delineated in the Maritime Strategy were to:

> Deny the Soviets their kind of war by exerting global pressure, indicating that the conflict will be neither short nor localized.
>
> Destroy the Soviet Navy: both important in itself and a necessary step for us to realize our objectives.
>
> Influence the land battle by limiting redeployment of forces, by ensuring reinforcement and resupply, and by direct application of carrier air and amphibious power.
>
> Terminate the war on terms acceptable to us and our allies through measures such as threatening direct attack against the homeland or changing the nuclear correlation of forces.[18]

Summary of the Maritime Strategy

In summary, Peacetime Presence, Crisis Response, and Warfighting provide the framework of the Maritime Strategy. Forward Deployment of our Naval forces in a Peacetime Presence mode contributes to international stability through our balancing the forces in the region and also strengthens our alliances by our demonstrated interest in their area. In the Crisis Response mode, Naval forces would contain and control the crisis using the range of capabilities from presence through surveillance, show of force, limited strikes, landing Marines, noncombatant evacuation (NEO) and blockade. Deterrence of threats ranging from terrorism to nuclear war is the focus of both Peacetime Presence and Crisis Response.[19]

The Warfighting segment of the Maritime Strategy details the framework of how the Navy would be used in a global war, in this case, against the Soviets. The "maritime campaign"[20] consists of three phases. Deterrence or Transition to War provides for early closure of the crisis and escalation control, plus the rapid forward deployment of additional forces to global positions with the goal being deterrence. Speed and decisiveness would be the keys to the success of all phases of the strategy.[21]

Should the above deterrence fail, Seizing the Initiative entails launching a global effort against Soviet naval forces to force them to fight the war on our terms and applying global pressure on the Soviets, including threatening their homeland. The third phase, Carry the Fight to the Enemy, has as its objectives the completion of the destruction of the Soviet Navy started in Phase II above, influencing the land battle, and changing the nuclear correlation of forces, all to provide strong pressure for war termination.

WORLD IN TRANSITION; THE THREATS

As discussed earlier, what is to be determined is whether the framework provided by the Maritime Strategy is valid in today's world in transition. At this point perhaps a review of the threats arranged against our national interests would be in order. As has been expressed by one of our more senior leaders:

> A principal feature of this era is the continuing and widespread existence of localized conflicts and crisis, mostly in the Third World, but often with global implications. This profusion of crisis and conflicts has been a feature of the international environment since World War II. In 1984, millions of people were involved in more than 30 armed conflicts throughout the world. These ran the gamut from civil unrest in Sri Lanka, to insurgencies in Central and South America, to civil war in Chad, to direct conflict between states in the Persian Gulf...
>
> The international setting is complicated by the proliferation of modern, high-technology weaponry in the Third World. Certainly the most alarming aspect of this proliferation is the growing number of nations in positions to acquire mass annihilation weapons-chemical, biological, and even nuclear. Even in the absence of such weapons, impressive conventional arsenals possessed by Third World nations pose an immediate concern. While these weapons do not fundamentally change the causes of instability, they do change the nature of conflict and the threats we face. Naval forces must be prepared to encounter high-technology, combined-arms threats in virtually every ocean of the world.
>
> The rise of state-sponsored terrorism is a new and disturbing phenomenon. Its unpredictability, worldwide scope, and anonymity render it one of the most insidious threats we face today. Terrorism is not new, but the threat has increased because terrorism has, in some cases, become a preferred aim of state action. If not countered, it can be effective against targeted forward-deployed forces. By placing at risk forward-deployed forces, terrorists (and their state sponsors) hope to be able to intimidate us into withdrawing, thereby undermining our credibility.[22]

Sound current? The above was taken from Admiral Watkins' description of "The Era of Violent Peace"[23] contained in the Maritime Strategy printed in 1986. To further the discussion of the threat, let us see what has changed since his description of those threats in 1986.

Proliferation has continued, to the point that many Third World countries have not only acquired long-range missiles but have also, as in the case of Iraq, made improvements in their ranges. As indicated by Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney in a statement to the Senate in February 1990:

> At least a half dozen nations are working to acquire nuclear capabilities,... Certain of these nations are hostile to U.S. interests and have indicated that they will attempt to assert domination over neighboring areas.[24]

In addition, even with the changes occurring in Soviet attitudes, progress in the Pacific has not been as rapid and threats to regional stability still exist. North Korea is still a potential threat and insurgencies, terrorism, and drug trafficking trouble Asian and Pacific nations.[25]

Latin America and the Caribbean have a regional commitment to democracy (Cuba and Guyana being the only holdouts) which has been a striking change in the last decade. However, they enter the 1990's in trouble, with desperate economic and social conditions in many countries.[26] As succinctly described by Abraham F. Lowenthal in February 1990,

> Translated into human terms, the statistics on Latin America's plight mean hunger, infant death, boat people and feet people, stunted education, epidemics, street crime and delinquency, and mounting despair. The political residue of the 1980's, in turn, is overwhelming repudiation of incumbent governments in almost every election; increasing political polarization in many nations; incipient questioning of the democratic framework in several; and growing insurgencies and terrorist violence in a few.[27]

In the Third World then, not only are those concerns described by Admiral Watkins still present, but in many cases they have worsened. Crises will continue to arise from shifts in the balance of power, international terrorism, the continued proliferation of advanced weapons, and ageless regional rivalries. In addition, most of those crises are likely to occur near navigable waters.[28]

Last, but not least, let's review the threat not only against which the Warfighting segment of the Maritime Strategy was directed but also the rationale for which much of the Peacetime Presence and Crisis Response scenarios were written, specifically, the Soviets.

Some have described the events in Europe as a Second Russian Revolution,[29] and while the prospects of the Soviets launching a premeditated attack on Western Europe are less probable, there may be an increased chance of inadvertent conflict just because of the unpredictability of the experiment.[30] In any case, because of its strategic nuclear

arsenal, the Soviet Union remains the one country in the world able to destroy the United States.

However, on the positive side, much has been accomplished in the past year which indicates a more amenable Soviet Union. Included are:

-the demise of some Soviet-imposed regimes.

-movement toward free markets.

-tentative steps toward democratization.

-Soviet agreements with Czechoslovakia and Hungary for complete troop withdrawals by the end of June this year.[31]

-some unilateral force reductions prior to, and then agreement reached on, CFE (conventional forces in Europe) in the fall of 1990.

-in October 1990, Germany unified and in NATO.

Finally, and of even more significant impact, the Soviet Union allied with other members of the UN Security Council in voting for the condemnation of, and sanctions against, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Our paradigm of a regional crisis escalating into a super power confrontation,[32] i.e., the original rationale behind Crisis Response, has been exploded.

Concurrently, the Warsaw Pact nations, if there even is a pact anymore, are planning or have already commenced to reduce military spending. The possibility of their joining the Soviet Union in a march on NATO seems improbable.[33]

In summary, our earlier bipolar view of the world was one in which there was a singular ominous Soviet bear bent on expansionism and who, if not mitigating regional crisis around the world, was at least greedily taking advantage of them. The revolutionary events of the past two years have us now reviewing the world and concluding that what we see confronting us is a multipolar-threat-world consisting of an economically anemic (but still militarily awesome) bear bent only on self defense, and a plethora of potential Third World crises that might require our attention for reasons ranging from bilateral defense agreements to vital U.S. interests in the affected region.

The framework provided by the Warfighting segment of the Maritime Strategy is, as written, still a valid campaign plan with which to prevail over the Soviets in a conventional war, provided that unlikely (at the present time) scenario were to unfold. However, it is very singular in its objective. Since the threat is no longer just the Soviets, perhaps the strategy should change to a policy toward many.

In my view the Maritime Strategy needs to be changed in only two ways to accommodate the changed threat scenario and to be a viable framework during this revolutionary period until the new national strategy of the New World Order is codified. One change is in the actual framework of the Maritime Strategy and the other is in its philosophy, each to be discussed in the following section.

RECOMMENDED CHANGES

My first recommendation for change to the Maritime Strategy is in its framework, specifically the Crisis Response segment. From the previous discussion of the threat and from remarks by President Bush,[34] it can be seen that our national policy is being optimized for regional conflict versus a threat to Europe. However, I noted earlier in my review of the Maritime Strategy a weakness in the framework which provided for the use of Naval forces in Crisis Response. To provide the correct framework,my first recommendation for change then, is to insert the "Warfighting" framework into the Crisis Response segment of the Maritime Strategy. This provides a clear framework to the operational commander to apply in formulating his theater strategy. As similarly indicated by Admiral Watkins[35] when discussing the overall Maritime Strategy, we actually are already doing it this way, we just need to codify the strategy.

My recommendation for the Crisis Response framework is as follows:

Deterrence or Transition to Limited War

- -Early closure of crisis
- -Escalation control
- -Rapid forward deployment of additional forces to positions surrounding the instigator(s)

Seizing the Initiative

-Launch an effort against all instigator(s)' naval forces

-Prosecute war on our terms

-Apply global pressure on instigator(s)

-Threaten homeland(s) of instigator(s)

Carry the Fight to the Enemy

-Destroy his Navy

-Influence the land battle

-Eliminate or radically reduce his forces of mass destruction (nuclear, chemical, biological)

As can be seen by a review of our limited war with Iraq where we followed the above framework almost to the letter, we already do it this way.

While the Iraqi War is the extreme example of crisis response, the majority of our efforts have been confined to the Deterrence phase and the use of those capabilities described in the original Crisis Response framework of "presence", "surveillance", "show of force", "limited strikes", etc., what I would term are techniques
of "escalation control".

Finally, Crisis Response is no longer executed to prevent escalation of the crisis into a confrontation with the Soviets; it is now done in response to our regional interests.

My second recommendation with respect to the Maritime Strategy is the more controversial but has the possibility of paying the greatest dividends, particularly in world stability. In no way do I intend to forget the threat of the Soviet strategic nuclear arsenal; however, what I propose is a method of deterrence through understanding and confidence building. Some of this we have already started; however, I would suggest that we are now at a point in Soviet and U.S. history that we may make a significant change in our philosophy.

My proposal goes beyond removing the term "Soviet" from the Warfighting segment of our Maritime Strategy and replacing it with "belligerent". I propose to not only include the Soviets as a member of our coalition when we are discussing coalition warfare against a Third World belligerent, but also to commence discussions and planning with them for combined naval exercises.

To support the above proposal I will divide my discussion into three portions: what is in it for us; what is in it for the Soviets; and what are the mutual benefits?

First, for ourselves, we must continue to meet requirements globally with smaller force levels and provide forward presence and force projection with the philosophy, "put out the fire before it starts". This deterrence orientation will become even more dependent on alliance with allies and other international forces in the future, particularly with forward bases on the

wane.[36] Therefore, one of the four main pillars of the U.S. Navy, Allied Coalitions, could be strengthened if we approach regional issues from a North-South rather than East-West orientation. As described by John Lehman in the Spring of 1984,

> We are forward deployed, and the development is fundamentally based on coalition approaches to all threats, not go-it-alone approaches.

We have taken the first step in this direction in the Iraq-Kuwait war; I propose taking the next steps toward an even stronger coalition.

Next, for the Soviets, there is some concern for them in the Pacific region about the economic growth,(and potential military growth) of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. There is some feeling that our security treaty with Japan not only served for Japanese defense but also had the second-order effect of containing Japan.[37] Similarly, in Europe, the Soviet concern with a combined Germany may have been somewhat buffered by, and could have been part of their rational for, allowing the united Germany to stay in NATO.

Continuing, just as they are still our most powerful potential adversary, we are the country which most concerns them. Our fleets virtually surround them and operate with seeming impunity in waters within striking range of their homeland. Confidence and security building measures are already in use,

such as reciprocal port visits in the Atlantic and ongoing discussions of similar events in the Pacific;[38] however, conceptual discussions to create new international cooperation at sea in areas of mutual security could lead to removal of lack of understanding and potential conflict and would allow the Soviets to apportion a greater amount of their resources to economic growth, i.e., the "U.S. Threat" is smaller.

Finally, what are the mutual benefits of coalition building with the Soviets? First, an increasing emphasis by both of us can be placed on maintaining regional stability and balance. The ability of Third World clients to extract support from either of us has already been decreased and our ability to work together to resolve existing regional conflicts is increasing. Examples of this already exist in Namibia,[39] the joint agreement for food support to Ethiopia in June 1990,[40] and most recently in the Iraq-Kuwait war. In the Iraq-Kuwait war, we have come the closest to actual combined naval operations with the Soviet Navy. Perhaps their own recent Vietnam-like experience in Afghanistan made them leery of foreign entanglements and kept their ships on the sidelines; however, the opportunity was there. In this case, they used their ships only to protect their shipping. However, their use of their vast mine sweeping capabilities would have been a boon to the coalition efforts in the region, and perhaps might have prevented damage to our own forces.

The next steps for maintaining regional stability could well be the following: the establishment of mutual security problems in a region,[41] say the Pacific; followed up by a discussion of force capability each of us can provide to the area; then a series of combined exercises to demonstrate to the region our mutual interests.

Finally, the second-order benefits of the relationships developed by our discussions and exercises could be a fundamental change in both of our attitudes, away from the bargaining tables of the past where each gave something up, toward ways to move together against world problems from arms proliferation to our mutual overabundance of nuclear weapons. This is what I term deterrence through understanding and confidence building.

SUMMARY

The Maritime Strategy as codified by Admiral Watkins in 1986 provided a framework for global use of Naval forces across the operational continuum to war termination. A product of thinking based on a National strategy of containment, its first two segments, Peacetime Presence and Crisis Response, were basically designed to deter a war with the Soviet Union which theoretically would grow out of a regional conflict. The third segment, Warfighting, held as its objective the deterrence of strategic nuclear war and was, in essence, a published campaign plan for engaging the Soviets in a conventional war.

That earlier bipolar view of the world was one in which there was a singular ominous Soviet bear bent on expansionism and who, if not initiating regional crises around the world, was at least greedily taking advantage of them. The revolutionary events of the past two years have us reviewing the world and concluding that what we are now confronted with is a multipolar-threat-world. It consists of not only an economically anemic (but still militarily awesome) bear bent only on self-preservation, but also a plethora of potential Third World crises that might require our attention.

The framework provided by the Warfighting segment of the Maritime Strategy, Deterrence and Transition to War, Seizing the Initiative, then Carrying the Fight to the Enemy, is still a valid campaign plan with which to prevail over the Soviets in a conventional war; however, it is very singular in its objectives. Since the threat is no longer just the Soviets, the overall strategy should change to a policy toward many.

During the present revolutionary period, as we transition into a new world order, and while our national policy is being optimized for regional conflict versus a threat to Europe, the Maritime Strategy needs to be changed in only two ways, one a minor adjustment to its framework, the other a more major change in its focus.

To clarify for the operational commander just what to use for a framework for Crisis Response, which was claimed to be "the heart of the Maritime Strategy"[42] but which had little codification in the original, I recommend the insertion of the "Warfighting" framework into that segment, modified or de-Sovietized as indicated earlier.

Secondly, and of equal importance, my proposal for the change of focus, or philosophy, of the Maritime Strategy is not only to remove the term "Soviet" from the Warfighting segment of our Strategy and replace it with "belligerent", i.e., a policy toward many, but also to include the Soviets as a member of our coalition when we are discussing coalition warfare against a Third World belligerent. In addition, I propose to commence discussions and planning with them for combined naval exercises in regions where we have mutual security interests.

Conceptual discussions to create new international cooperation at sea in areas of mutual security could lead to removal of misunderstanding and potential conflict, provide for an increasing emphasis by both of us on maintaining regional stability and balance, and create the second-order benefit of developing ways to move together against world problems. Soviet/US combined naval forces have the potential for providing stability in many regions of the globe that were previously seen to be areas of expansion/containment of our/their ideologies.

Coalition building and alliance strengthening as a deterrence to Soviet adventurism was seen as one of the major rationales behind Peacetime Presence[43] in the original Maritime Strategy; why not coalition building with the Soviets as a deterrent through understanding and confidence building? Is this a pipe dream or could we be piping aboard a New World Order?

ENDNOTES

1. Admiral James D. Watkins, USN(Ret.), "The Maritime Strategy," supplement to the U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, January 1986 (hereafter referred to as "The Maritime Strategy").

2. Ibid., p. 4.

3. Ibid., p. 6.

4. Ibid., p. 4.

5. Naval Warfare Publication 1 (Revision A), Strategic Concepts of the U.S. Navy, Part I, p. 1-3-1 (hereafter referred to as "NWP 1").

6. The Maritime Strategy, p. 8.

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9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

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12. Ibid., p. 9.

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20. Ibid., p. 14.

21. Ibid., p. 9.

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25. Admiral Huntington Hardisty, USN, "Pacific Watchword is Change," Defense 90, May/June, p. 18.

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29. Lt. Gen. George L. Butler, "Adjusting to Post-Cold War Strategic Realities," Parameters, Vol. 21, No. 1, Spring 1991, p. 3.

30. Cheney, p. 2.

31. Paul D. Wolfowitz, "Rethinking NATO in a Europe Whole and Free," statement by Undersecretary of Defense for Policy to the European Affairs Subcommittee, 9 May 1990, p. 1.

32. The Maritime Strategy, p. 8.

33. Wolfowitz, p. 1.

34. President George Bush, "In Defense of Defense," remarks to the Aspen Institute Symposium, 2 August 1990, Defense Issues, Vol. 5, No. 31, p. 1.

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